THE RIGHTS OF THE MASJID (MOSQUE)

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WHAT IS A MASJID (MOSQUE)?

Masjid is an Arabic word meaning place for prostration. Masajid is the plural of the word masjid. Masajid are considered to be houses of Allah that are constructed for the dedication of his worship. As such, they are structured to always be accessible for the worshipers of Allah, be they male or female. This fact is evident from Surah Al-Jinn (72:18) of the Quran which reads: "**Mosques are built for Allah's worship; therefore, invoke not anyone along with Allah.**" Likewise, Surah Al-Baqarah (9:114) of the Quran reads: "**And who is more unjust than he who prevents (men) from the masajid of Allah, that His name should be remembered in them...**" In addition, a hadith of Imam Muslim reads: "**The most beloved places to Allah on earth are the Masajid, and the most hated places to Allah on earth are the Markets.**"

Masajid are also used as places of study, reflection, and rest which often serve as a community center, library, and an educational center for the worshipers of Allah. This fact is evident from a hadith collected by Bukhari wherein Naf'a narrated: "**Abdullah bin 'Umar said: 'I used to sleep in the mosque of the Prophet while I was young and unmarried.'**" Furthermore, a hadith collected by Imam Muslim states: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said, 'No gathering gathers in a house from the houses of Allah, reciting the book of Allah and teaching it to one another, except that serenity befalls them, Mercy envelops them, the angels surround them and Allah mentions them to (the inhabitants of the heavens).**" Lastly, on this point is the hadith of Ibn Majah wherein Abu Hurayra narrated that Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) said: "**Whoever will come to my mosque with the only intention to conduct teaching/learning activities and to promote beneficial knowledge will have his reward equivalent to the person who fights in the path of Allah. A person who has some other purpose in his mind is like an individual who is looking towards other's wealth.**"

The masjid is also the place in which non-Muslims can visit in order to receive Islamic guidance and information. However, it is important to note that despite the fact that non-Muslim guests are permitted to enter a masjid, they must of

course, adhere to the Islamic manners and etiquette of the masjid while there. Likewise, all Muslims in attendance are therefore obligated to act with decency and be considerate to their non-Muslim guests. The evidence for the permissibility of non-Muslims to enter a masjid is the hadith of Imam Muslim wherein Abu Huraira reportedly said: "**The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) sent some horsemen to Najd. They captured a man. He was from the tribe of Banu Hanifa and was called Thumama b. Uthal. He was the chief of the people of Yamama. People bound him with one of the pillars of the mosque. The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) came out to (see) him. He said: 'O Thumama, what do you think?' He replied: 'Muhammad (P.B.U.H.), I have good opinion of you. If you kill me, you will kill a person who has spilt blood. If you do me a favor, you will do a favor to a grateful person. If you want wealth, ask and you will get what you will demand. The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) left him (in this condition) for two days, (and came to him again) and said: 'What do you think, O Thumama?' He replied: 'What I have already told you. If you do a favor, you will do a favor to a grateful person. If you kill me, you will kill a person who has spilt blood. If you want wealth, ask and you will get what you will demand. The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) left him until the next day when he (came to him again) and said: 'What do you think, O Thumama?' He replied: 'What I have already told you. If**

you do me a favor, you will do a favor to a grateful person. If you kill me, you will kill a person who has spilt blood. If you want wealth, ask and you will get what you will demand. The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) said: 'Set Thumama free.' He went to a palm-grove near the mosque and took a bath. Then he entered the mosque and said: 'I bear testimony (to the truth) that there is no god but Allah and I testify that Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) is His bondman and His messenger. O Muhammad (P.B.U.H.), by Allah, there was no face on the earth more hateful to me than your face, but (now) your face has become to me the dearest of all faces. By Allah, there was no religion more hateful to me than your religion, but (now) your religion has become the dearest of all religions to me. By Allah, there was no city more hateful to me than your city, but (now) your city has become the dearest of all cities to me. Your horsemen captured me when I intended going for Umra. Now what is your opinion (in the matter)?' The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) announced good tidings to him and told him to go on 'Umra. When he reached Mecca, somebody said to him: 'Have you changed your religion?' He said: 'No!' I have rather embraced Islam with the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.). By Allah, you will not get a single grain of wheat from Yamama until it is permitted by the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.).'"

Lastly, the masjid is a special and sacred place for Muslims from all cultures, ethnic backgrounds, and socioeconomic

status categories to collectively serve their Creator without feeling any sense of racism or hatred. Thus, being one Ummah (community) united under the banner of Islam. The evidence for this position is found in Surah Al-Hujurat (49:11 & 49:13) of the Quran which reads: "**O ye who believe! let not some men among you laugh at others: it may be that the (latter) are better than the (former): Nor let some women laugh at others: it may be that the (latter) are better than the (former): nor defame nor be sarcastic to each other nor call each other by (offensive) nicknames: Ill-seeming is a name connoting wickedness (to be used of one) after he has believed: And those who do not desist are (Indeed) doing wrong.**" And, "**O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of Allah is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And Allah has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things).**"

THE RIGHTS OF THE MASJID WHICH MUST BE HONORED

PERFORM THE FARD SALAT IN THE MASJID:

Perhaps the most important right of the Masjid is that it must be frequented by the resident Muslims. Ideally, the main masjid of a particular city (jami masjid) should be the primary location for the Friday congregational prayer (salatul jumuah).

Furthermore, it is mandated that salatul Jumuah (sermon and the Friday congregational prayer) and all of the five daily fard (obligatory) prayers are to be offered in congregation within the masjid as long as there is one in the vicinity of the Muslims. This fact is evident from Surah Al-Jumuah of the Quran (62:9) which reads: "**O you who have believed, when [the adhan] is called for the prayer on the day of Jumu'ah [Friday], then proceed to the remembrance of Allah and leave trade. That is better for you, if you only knew.**" Furthermore, a hadith collected by Bukhari reads: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said, 'If anyone goes back and forth to the mosque [to attend the prayers], Allah will prepare for him a feast in paradise as often as he goes back and forth.'**" However, the Muslim regarded as a traveler is exempt from attending the congregational salat. This fact is evident from the hadith of Bukhari in which Ibn Umar narrated: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) ordered the mu'azhzhin to say: 'Pray in your places,' on a cold, stormy night during a journey.'**" Also, a hadith of Abu Dawud reports: "**Mu'azh reports that while the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) was at Tabuk and the sun had passed the meridian, the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) combined the zuhr and asr prayers before he started his journey. If he started his journey before the sun passed its meridian, he would delay the zuhr prayer until the time when he stopped for the asr prayer. He would do likewise for the maghrib prayer. If the sun set**

before he began his journey, he would combine the maghrib and isha prayers [at that time]. If he began a journey before the sun had set, he would then combine them at the time of isha."

There are also two primary exceptions to the obligation of offering Jumuah prayers in congregation. Firstly, if there is inclement weather and one does not have transportation which protects them from the elements, it is permissible for one to remain at home and not attend the Masjid for the congregational prayers. This fact is evident from a hadith of Bukhari wherein Muhammad bin Sirin narrated: **"On a rainy day, Ibn Abbas (RA) said to his Muadh-dhin, 'After saying 'Ash-hadu anna Muhammadun Rasool-Allah', do not say 'Haiya alas-Salah (Come for Salat), but say: 'Sallu fi Baytikum (Offer Salat in your houses).' The man did so, but the people disliked it. Ibn Abbas (RA) said, 'It was done by one who was much better than I (i.e. the Prophet, PBUH). No doubt, the Juma'a prayer is compulsory, but I dislike putting you to task by bringing you out walking in mud & slush.'"**

Secondly, if the Eid happens to occur on a Friday, it is then permissible for one to abandon the Jumuah prayer when they have already observed the Eid prayer in congregation. The evidence for this ruling is a hadith collected by Abu Dawud wherein Ilyas bin Abi Ramlah Ash-Shami reportedly said: **"I was**

present when Muawiyah bin Abi Sufiyan asked Zaid bin Arqam: 'Did you witness two Eid (i.e. the Eid and the Jumuah) being combined on one day during the time of Allah's Messenger (P.B.U.H.)?' He replied, 'Yes.' So he said: 'He (the Prophet, PBUH) prayed the Eid then he was lenient about Friday prayer, for he said: 'Whoever wishes to pray can pray.'" Furthermore, another hadith collected by Abu Dawud narrates that Al-A'Mash reported from Ata bin Abi Rabah that he said: **"Ibn Az-Zubair (RA) once led us in the early morning in the Eid prayer, and it happened to be on a Friday. Then we went to attend Friday prayer, but he did not come out (to give Khutba etc.). So we prayed by ourselves (without congregation). And Ibn Abbas (RA) at that time was in Al-Ta'if, so when he came back we informed him of this.' He said: 'He has followed the Sunnah.'"**

Upon entering any masjid, everyone is strongly advised to pray to rakahs (units of prayer) before sitting. This practice is customarily known as the "Tahiyyat al-Masjid;" the Salutation of the Masjid Prayer. This fact is evident from the hadith of Bukhari wherein Abu Qatada reported: **"The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) said: 'If any of you enters the Masjid, let him not sit until he prays two rakats.'"**

CONDUCTING BUSINESS IN THE MASJID:

It is also extremely frowned upon that business dealings should ever take place within the prayer areas of a Masjid. The evidence for this position is a hadith of Tirmidhi wherein the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) is reported to have said, "**Whoever sells in the Masjid, say to them: May Allah not grant success in your sale**." Additionally, the before mentioned hadith of Imam Muslim further solidifies this position when it says: "**The most beloved places to Allah on earth are the Masajid, and the most hated places to Allah on earth are the Markets**." The important point of this hadith to note is the fact that Masajid (Mosques), which are places devoted to the worship of Allah, happen to be the most beloved places on this earth to him. However, markets on the other hand, which are places dedicated to the pursuit of profit through buying and selling, generally distract people from the remembrance of Allah. Thus, substantiating the position that business dealings of buying and selling should be kept outside of the masjid prayer area. Lastly and most importantly, Surah An-Nur (24:37) highlights the important points made regarding the undesirability of pursing business deals (buying/selling) in the masjid due to the fact that they often divert mankind from the remembrance of Allah. The verse in question reads: "**By such people whom neither business nor business profit can divert from the remembrance of Allah, nor**

from establishing Salah and nor from paying Zakah, for they fear the Day of Judgment when hearts will be overturned and eyes will be petrified.”

THE MASJID MUST BE MAINTAINTAINED AND CLEANED:

The Masjid, in addition to being maintained by the Muslims must be kept clean and fresh smelling at all times. The evidence for this ruling is Surah At-Tauba (9:18) of the Quran which reads: “**The mosques of Allah should be maintained by those who believe in Allah and the Last Day, establish Salah (prayers), and pay Zakah (poor due) and fear none except Allah. It is they who are expected to follow the true guidance.**” Furthermore, a hadith of Ibn Majah which reads: “**The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) said: ‘To sweep the Masjid, to keep it tidy and clean, to cast out all dust and filth from the Masjid, to burn incense in the Masjid, especially to make the place fragrant with the aroma of incense on Fridays – all these are acts which lead to Jannah.’”**

TO NOT GO TO EXTREMES WHEN BEAUTIFYING THE MASJID:

The masjid must also not be beautified for the sake of being extravagant or to compete against other masajid in a boastful manner. The evidence for this ruling is the hadith of Abu Dawud which reads: “**The Prophet of Allah, Muhammad**

(P.B.U.H.), said: 'The Hour will not come to pass until people vie in boasting with each other in building masjids.'"

Furthermore, another hadith of Abu Dawud reports that ibn `Abbas narrated: "**The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) allegedly said: 'I have not been commanded to build lofty mosques.'"** An additional narration from Ibn 'Abbas in the collection of Abu Dawud foretell the undesirable practice of going to the extreme in beautifying places of worship being adopted by the Muslims when it states: "**You are going to adorn (mosques) as the Jews and Christians adorn (their places of worship).**"

ONLY MUSLIMS SHOULD PERFORM SALAT:

It is also reccommended that only those who truly believe in Allah and accept Mohammed (P.B.U.H.) as his final Prophet and Messenger should actually perform salat in the masjid; because, when one acknowledges this fact and testifies to it, they are considered to be a Muslim. Therefore, whenever a non-Muslim prays along with a Muslim without truly believing in Allah and Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H.), it makes the greatest act of worship for a Muslim into a mere show instead of a sacred act of worship. Furthermore, it can lead to non-Muslims with an evil intent joining the salat to make a mockery of the Muslims; which could result in a fight ensuing inside of the masjid.

IMAM MUST BE A MAN:

It is a right of the Masjid for the Imam to be a man. This fact is evident from the hadith of Ahmad wherein Umm Salamah (RA) narrated that the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) allegedly said: "**The best mosques for women are the innermost parts of their houses**." Also, a hadith of Imam Muslim that was narrated by Abu Huraira reports: "**The best rows for men are the first rows, and the worst ones the last ones, and the best rows for women are the last ones and the worst ones for them are the first ones**." Therefore, since the Imam stands at the front of the congregation, ahead of the first row, it would therefore be impractical for a woman to assume the Imam position in a mixed gender congregation; because, it would result in the loss or reward. Furthermore, when those narrations which depict women as leading the salat as an Imam are cited, they specify that the congregation consists of female worshipers who happen to stand next to the Imam instead of behind her; contrary to the manner in which the male serves as the Imam for the congregational salat. Furthermore, there is a hadith collected by Imam Muslim wherein Abu Mas'ood al-Ansaari reported: "**The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) said: "The people should be led in prayer by the one who has most knowledge of the Book of Allah (Quran); if they are equal in knowledge of the Quran, then by the one who has most**

knowledge of the Sunnah." However, there is a hadith collected by Bukhari which reads: "**The Mother of the Believers, 'Aisha (RA) would have her slave named Dhukwan lead her in prayer who would recite from a copy of the Quran.**" Now, there is no doubt that as a hafiza,(a female who has completely memorized the Qur'an) 'Aisha (RA) was more knowledgeable and a better reciter than her slave Dhukwan; especially, since he had to recite by looking at a copy of the Quran. Nevertheless, Aisha (RA) allowed him to lead her in prayer. Therefore, if it was permissible for a female to be the Imam, it is unimaginable to believe that Aisha (RA) would intentionally disobey the directive of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) and permit someone less qualified to lead the salat. Lastly, a hadith collected by Imam Muslim that was narrated from Anas ibn Malik states: "**He prayed behind the Messenger (P.B.U.H.), and with him were his grandmother and a (male) orphan. He said: 'The orphan and I stood in a row behind him; i.e., the Messenger (P.B.U.H.), and the old woman stood behind us.**" Thus, if women and men are not even permitted to stand together in salat, it is inconceivable to believe that it is permissible for a woman to lead a group of men as their Imam. To close on this point, it is imperative that advocates who believe that a woman can lead a man is salat, should ponder over the hadith of Bukhari that was narrated from Abu Bakrah who reported: "**No nation shall succeed that is led by a woman.**"

DO NOT RUSH INSIDE OF THE MASJID:

Another right of the masjid is that the worshippers whom are planning to attend the congregational prayer should not rush to join the salat if it has already commenced; because, the worshiper is regarded as being in salat while having the intention to perform it. The same also applies for the worshiper who is waiting for the salat to commence. This fact is evident from the hadith of Bukhari wherein Abu Qatadah reportedly said: "**We were praying with the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) when we heard the clamoring of some men. When they had prayed, the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) inquired: 'What was the matter with you?' They answered: 'We were hurrying for the salah.' He said: 'Do not do that...when you come to the salah come in peace and calm, and pray what you can with congregation and complete what you have missed.'**" Furthermore, another hadith of Bukhari reports that Abu Hurairah narrated: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said: 'When you hear the iqamah, proceed to the prayer with calm and dignity and do not rush. Pray what you can (with congregation) and complete what you miss.'**"

DO NOT BRADCAST LOST THINGS:

Another right of the masjid is to not broadcast that someone has lost something within it. The evidence for this ruling is a hadith collected by Imam Muslim wherein Abu Hurayrah

narrated that the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said: "**Whoever hears a man announcing in the mosque about some objects which he has lost, let him tell him 'May Allah not return it to you for the mosques are not built for that.'**" Therefore, if one attends a masjid with either their family or friends, it is recommended that a contingency plan be in place; such as agreeing beforehand to meet at a specific object or location if separated; Thus, providing an effective resolve. Furthermore, it is important to note that one should not bring those with special needs to the masjid if they are unable to effectively account for their whereabouts. However, some scholars maintain that there is an exception made for the announcing of a lost person.

GIVE SINCERE ADVICE:

Sincere advice should be given to a fellow Muslim if they are performing an act of worship incorrectly; because, whenever the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) would see someone not praying correctly he would advise them and provide a solution. The evidence for this ruling is the hadith of Imam Muslim wherein Anas Ibn Malik reportedly said: "**Whilst we were in the Mosque with the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) a Bedouin came and stood urinating in the Mosque. The Companions of the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) said, 'Stop it! Stop it!' and were about to attack him. But the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) said, 'Do not**

interrupt him; leave him alone.' So they left him until he had finished urinating, then the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) called him and said to him, 'In these Mosques it is not right to do anything like urinating or defecating; they are only for remembering Allah, praying and reading Quran,' or words to that effect. Then he commanded a man who was there to bring a bucket of water and throw it over the (urine), and he did so.'"

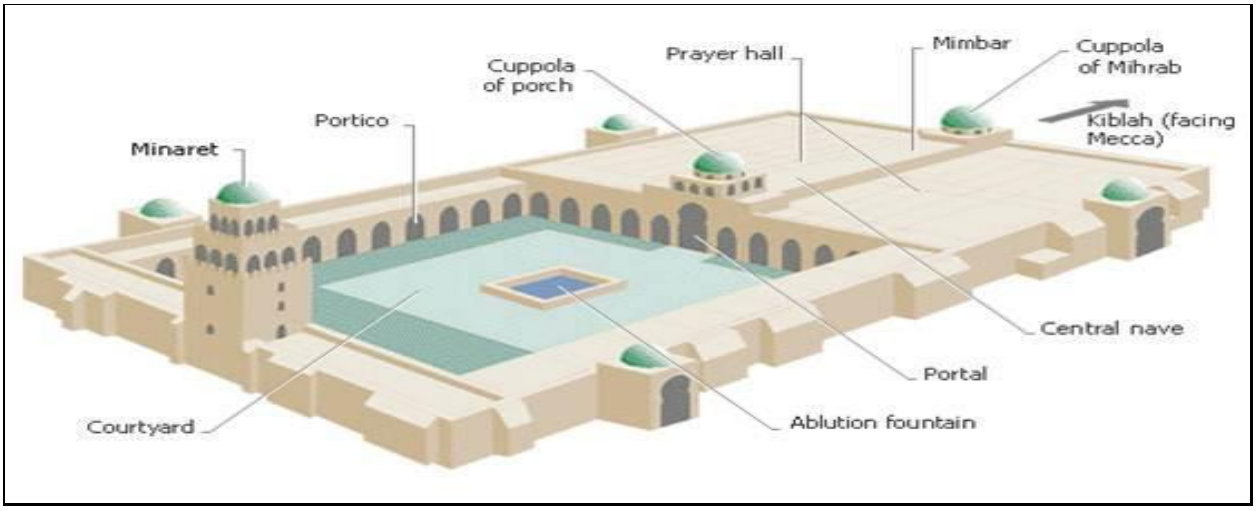
GENERAL FEATURES OF A MASJID

The first masajid of the Muslims were those built in al-Madinah al-Munawwarah (Medina, a city near Makkah, in today's Saudi Arabia); namely, Masjid al-Quba and Al-Masjid al-Nabawi (The Prophet's Mosque).

These masajid were built during the Prophet's (P.B.U.H.) lifetime and were made of mud bricks, tree trunks, and leaves, etc. They were not equipped with Domes, Minarets, carpet, or marbled tiles. They were extremely simple and constructed solely for the purpose of worshipping Allah.

All masajid are basically modeled after Al-Masjid al-Nabawi. The original Prophet's Mosque was built by the Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H.) himself, next to the house where he settled after his Hijrah (emigration) to Medina in 622 AD. The original building was a simple open-air square enclosure of 30x35 meters. The masjid was equipped with a minbar (pulpit) from where the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) addressed his followers. The masjid had columns made of date palm trunks, mud walls, and a thatched roof. The structure contained the rooms of his wives (RA), and was accessed through three doors; namely, Bab Rahmah to the south, Bab Jibril to the west and Bab al-Nisa' to the east. Across the courtyard from the minbar was a covered area where his followers could find shade. Bilal ibn Rabah, the first muezzin would climb to the roof of the masjid to better project his voice when calling the Azan to assemble the Muslims for prayer.

THE MAIN FEATURES OF A MASJID:



Virtually all masjid around the globe have common features; however, these features are not all inclusive. Among the common features are a minbar, a prayer hall, an ablution station, a muezzin to call the azan, a mihrab, a courtyard, and a minaret. Beyond these common characteristics, however, masajid vary greatly from place to place.

MINBAR:

During the lifetime of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) he used to hold a stick and sit upon a tree stump called Nahayu (date tree) whenever he delivered a Khutba (Sermon). However, after some time his companions proposed he use a better pulpit. The minbar they introduced was a wooden one made of tamarisk with three steps. Furthermore, after the minbar was introduced, the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) stopped holding a stick unless he was delivering a sermon in an open area. The evidence for these findings is the

hadith of Bukhari wherein Abu Haazim reported: **"A group of people came to Sahl ibn Sa'd, and they had differed concerning the minbar and what kind of wood it was made of. He said: 'By Allah, I know what kind of wood it is made of, and who made it, and I saw the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) the first day he sat on it.' I said to him: 'O Abu 'Abbas, tell us.' He said: 'The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) sent word to a woman of the Ansar, saying: 'Let your carpenter slave make me something of wood from which I may speak to the people.' So he made these three steps, then the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) ordered that it be placed in this spot. It was made of tamarisk wood from al-Ghaabah (a wooded area near Medina).'"**

In essence, the minbar is a stair case leading to a small platform that is placed on the right side of the mihrab (niche specifying the qibla) from which the Imam (prayer leader) addresses the congregation during the khutbah, etc.

The Imam delivers his address from the lower step of the minbar while the top part remains empty.

At the completion of the khutbah, the Imam descends the minbar and enters the mihrab to lead the salat. The minbar is traditionally made of richly carved wood; however, some masajid present them adorned with veneers of mother of pearl, ivory, limestone, etc.

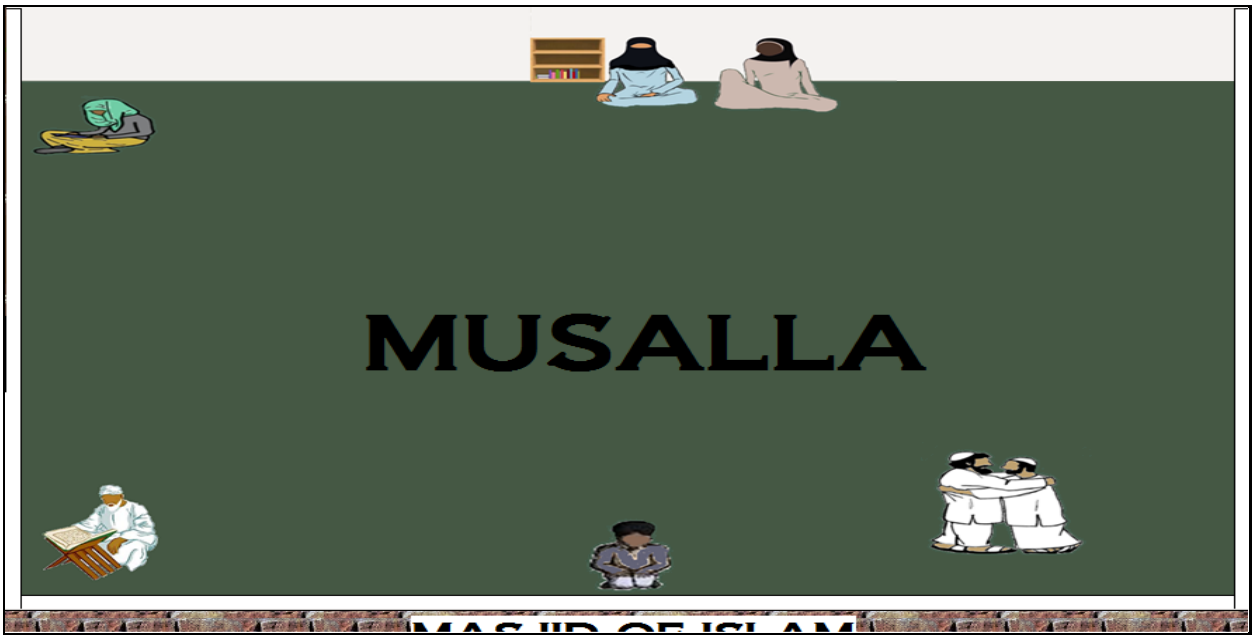
It is also important to note that there are authentic ahadith which clearly demonstrate that the Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H.) did not deliver the Eid khutbah standing atop of the minbar. Therefore, the use of a minbar is not obligatory. The evidence for this ruling is the hadith of Bukhari wherein Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri reportedly said: "The Messenger of Allah

(P.B.U.H.) used to come out on the day of al-Fitr and al-Adha to the prayer place, and the first thing he would do was to offer the prayer. **Then when he finished the prayer, he would stand facing the people, whilst the people were still sitting in their rows, and he would exhort them, and advise them and instruct them. If he wanted to send out a military detachment, he would do so, or if he wanted to issue some instructions, he would do so, then he would leave**..."

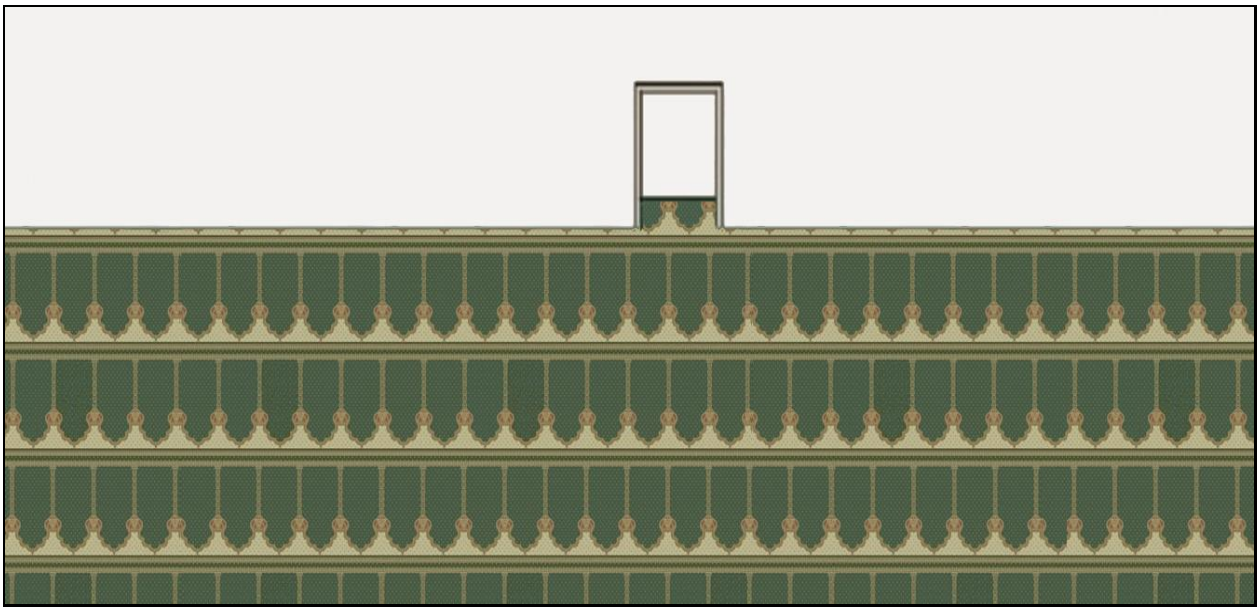
MUSALLA (PRAYER HALL):

The musalla is an open and uncluttered internal section of the masjid where the khutbah is performed and the worshiper performs salat.

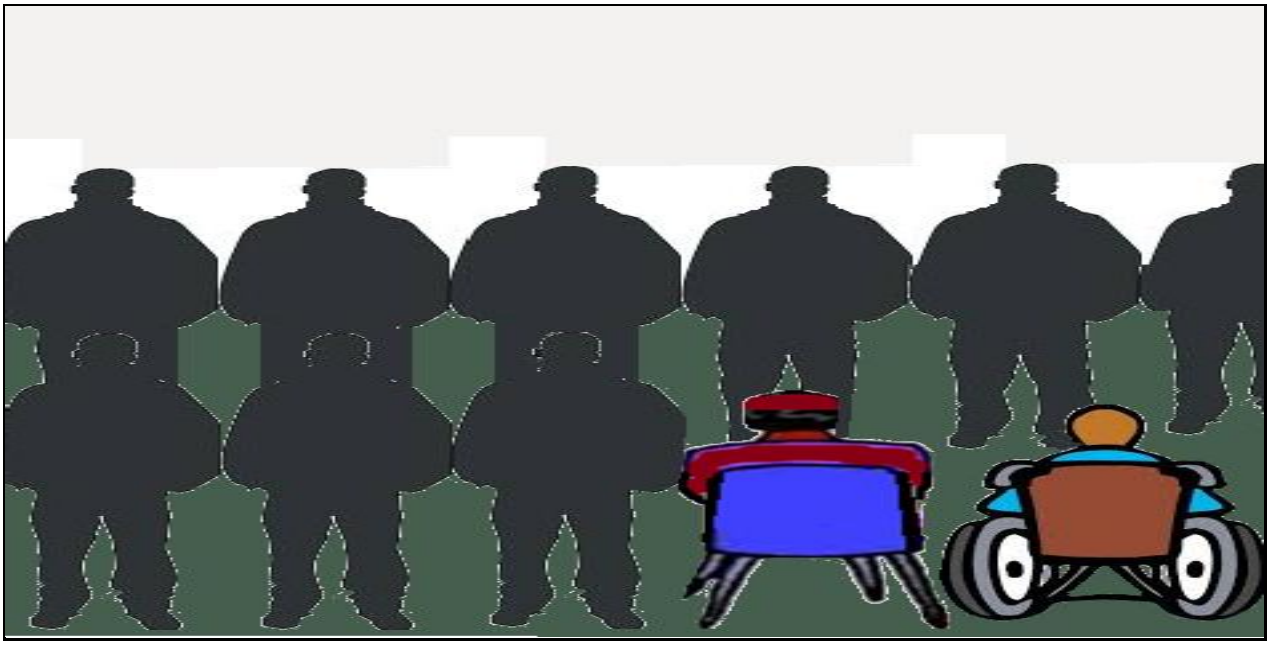
Members of the congregation sit on the floor which is usually carpeted.



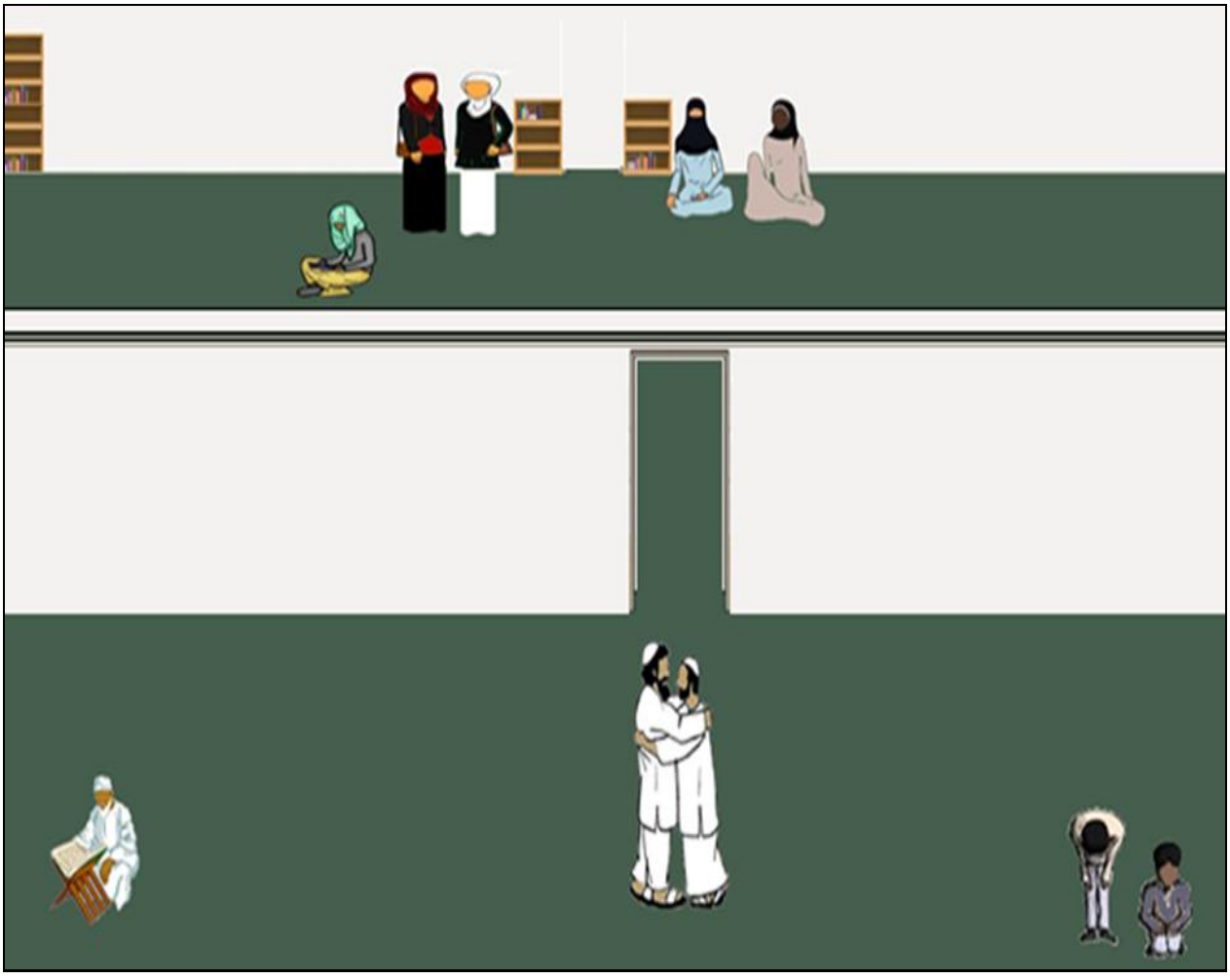
Ideally, the flooring is of a basic color. However, patters and lines for rows are permissible provided they are not distracting to worshipers.



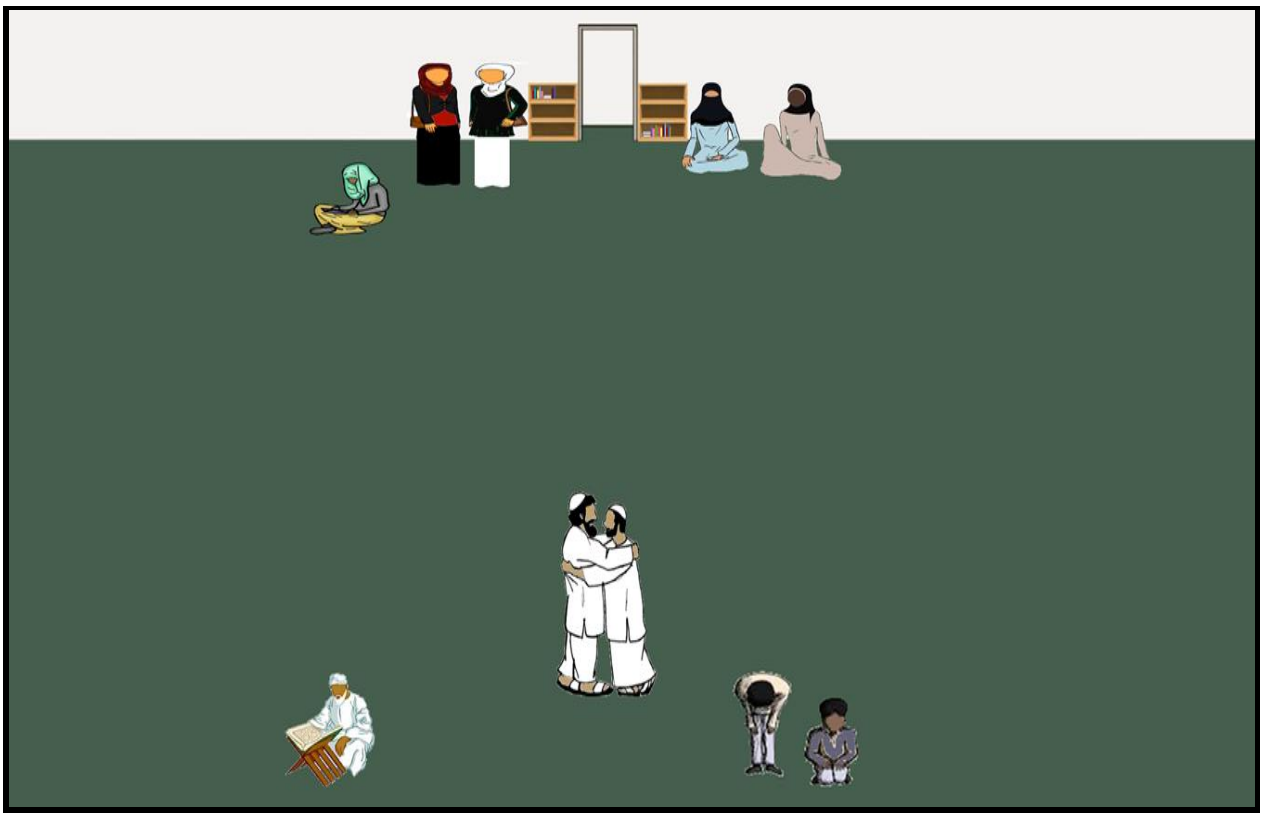
There are also no permanent pews or chairs positioned inside of the musalla. This is due to the fact that worshipers require adequate room to perform the ritual prayer and prostrate themselves. However, chairs can be temporarily placed in this area for the benefit of those members with special needs.



The congregation inside of the musalla is segregated with males positioned in the front near the Imam and females to the rear. Furthermore, because it is forbidden for men and women to stand together in salat, a number of masajid equip their musalla with a partition to separate the males from the females; thus forming two prayer areas within the prayer hall.



Other masajid generally accommodate males and females in the same musalla, with the worshippers dividing themselves by creating a gap of open space between them.



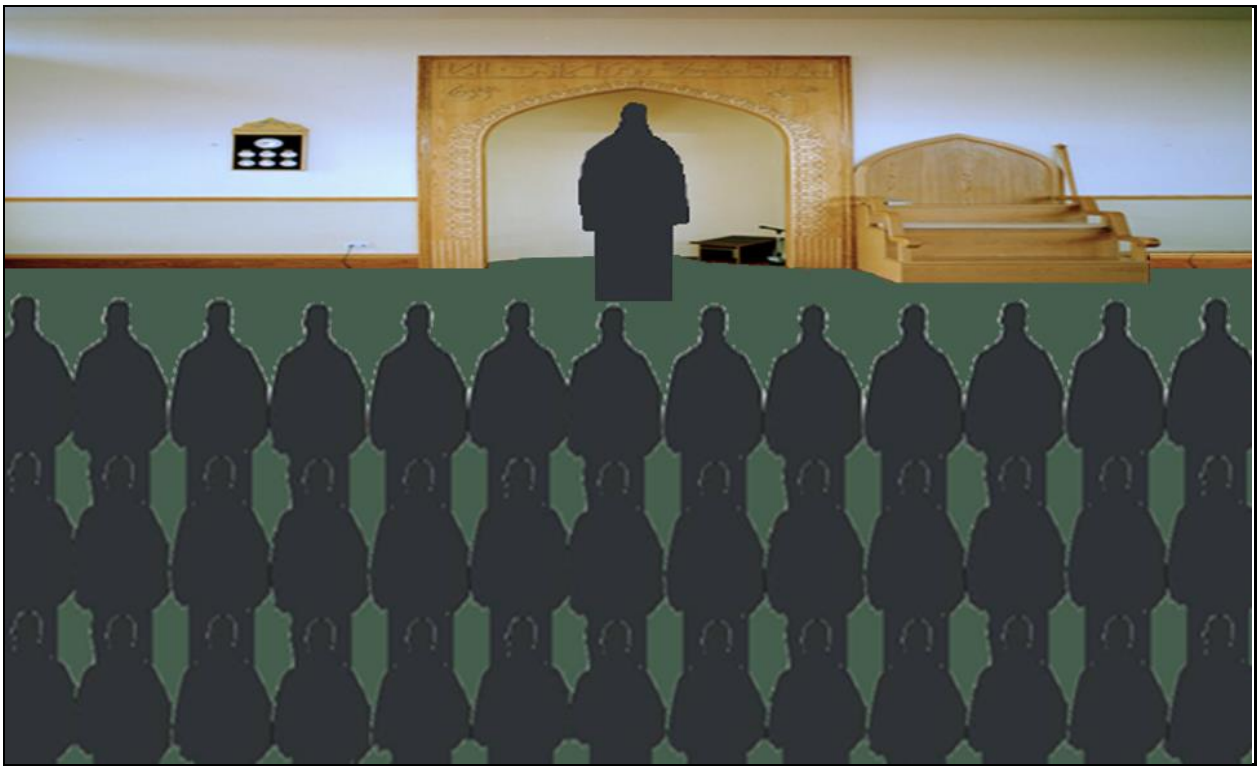
Lastly, some masajid have separate rooms for the female members equipped with video screens that are designed to broadcast the khutbah for their viewing pleasure.

The evidence for the musalla being a part of the masjid is the hadith of Bukhari wherein Sahl (bin Sa'd) reported: "**The distance between the Musalla of Allah's Apostle (P.B.U.H.) and the wall was just sufficient for a sheep to pass through.**"

MIHRAB:

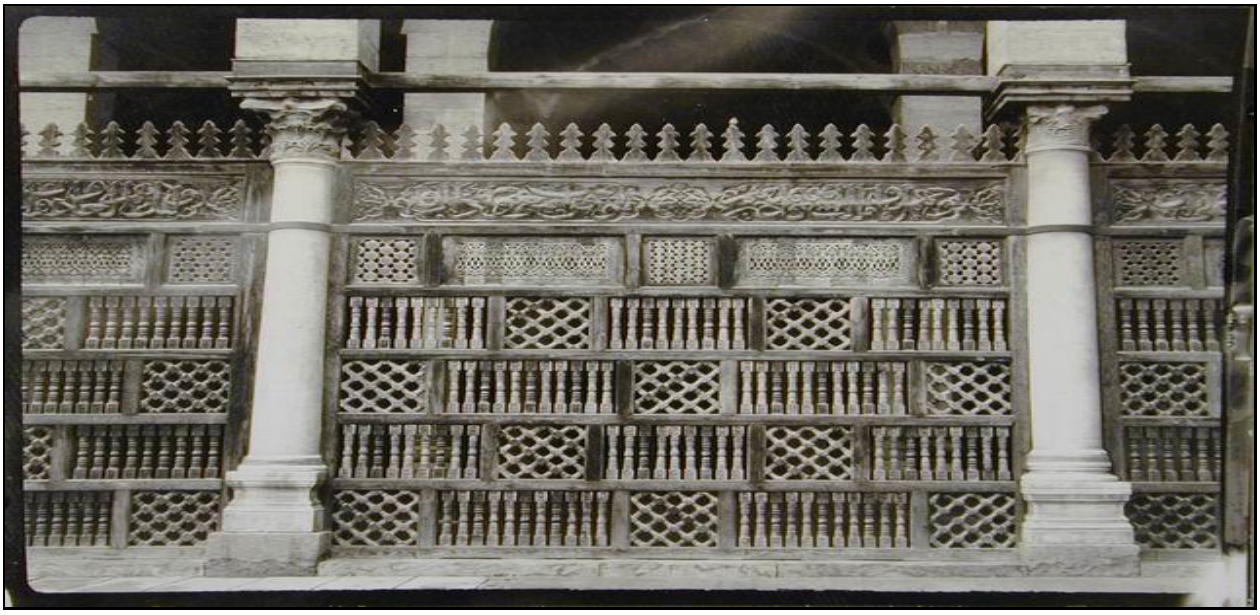
The mihrab is a common feature found in a number of masajid. The mihrab is an uncluttered niche in the wall of the musalla designed to specify the direction of the qibla. A mirhab can vary a great deal in size and color; however, they are customarily arch shaped like a doorway and are adorned with distinctly decorated tiles, calligraphy, etc. The musalla did not exist during the lifetime of the Prophet Muhammad (P.B.U.H.) or during the reign of the rightly guided caliphs (Rashidun Caliphate). Umar ibn Abd al-Aziz was the first to utilize a mihrab. He ordered al-Walid ibn Abd al-Malak, the governor of Madina to install one within Al-Masjid al-Nabawi when it was rebuilt.

After the maqsura was introduced into the general plan of the masjid, the mihrab assumed its present form of a concave niche. The mihrab is where the Imam stands while delivering the khutbah or leading the worshipers in salat. In essence before microphones and sound systems, the mihrab served as an acoustic device which amplified the voice of the Imam during the congregational prayer. Nowadays, a number masajid are equipped with both a mihrab and microphone sound systems.



It is also important to note that Islamic jurists have debated over the permissibility of placing a mihrab within a masjid. The majority of the jurists consider it permissible. However, the Shafi madhab view the feature as reprehensible.

MAQSURA:



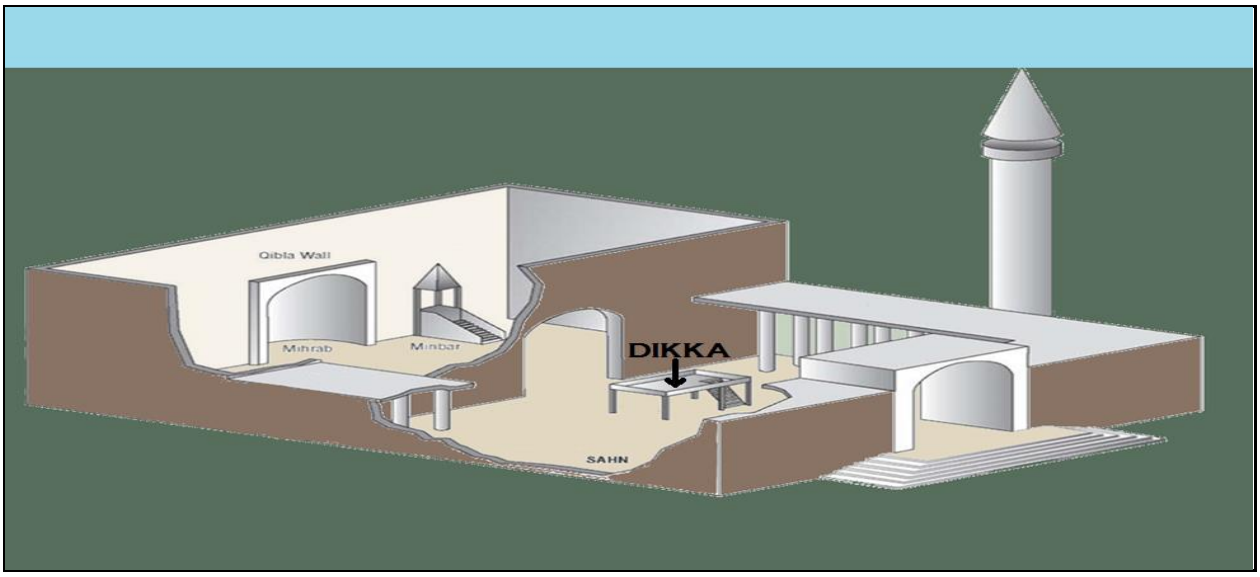
The maqsura is another structural detail typical of some but not all masajid. The maqsura is a screen or enclosure positioned around the mihrab to protect the Imam during worship services.

Allegedly, the maqsura was introduced as a barrier to safeguard the life of the calif from assassins.

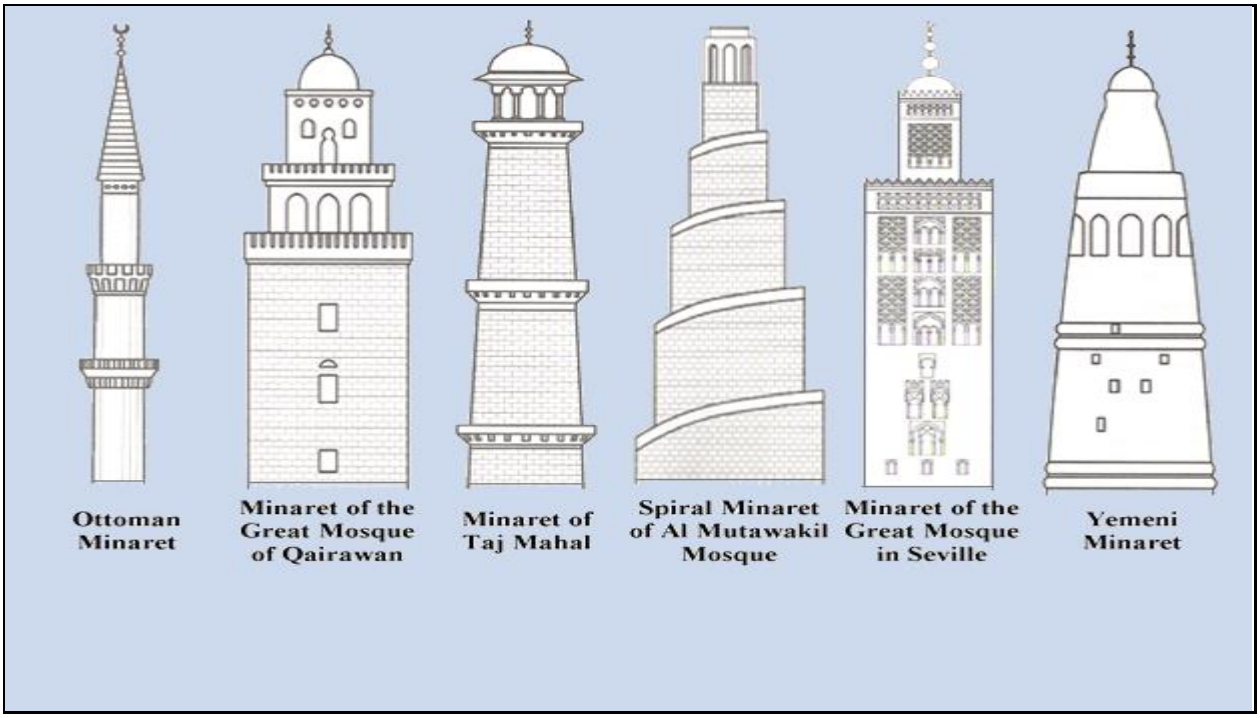
The original design of the maqsura involved the use of wooden screens decorated with carvings or interlocking turned pieces of wood (mashrabiyya), a mud-brick wall with spaces in it to allow the congregation to see the caliph as he led them in salat, and permanent stone structures.

DIKKA:

A dikka is a platform where the qadi repeats the sermon and prayer for those standing too far away from the minbar to clearly hear what is being said. It is generally found in larger masajid at the rear of the sanctuary, or in the courtyard, and along the same axis as the mihrab.



MINARET:


Ottoman Minaret
Minaret of the Great Mosque of Qairawan
Minaret of Taj Mahal
Spiral Minaret of Al Mutawakil Mosque
Minaret of the Great Mosque in Seville
Yemeni Minaret

A minaret is a tall, slender tower with a balcony that is either attached to or built nearby a masjid. Advocates of the minaret maintain that it serves a dual function; acting as both a landmark and a station from where the muezzin can broadcast the azan at great distances. Allegedly, it was not until at least seven centuries after the death of the Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H.) that the minaret became a universal feature of the grand masajid.

During the lifetime of the Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H.), the call to prayer was performed by the muezzin from the rooftop. However, in modern times the azan for most prayers times across

the world is broadcasted today via loud-speakers. Furthermore, a masjid is generally equipped with a single minaret; however, some masajid have more. It is also important to note that minarets are actually regarded my some Islamic scholars as an innovation (bidah). A primary reason why minarets were regarded as an undesirable innovation is due to the fact that they were not built specifically for the purpose of broadcasting the azan. Initially, the muezzin broadcasted the azan from the rooftop of the masjid or from the streets below.

SAHN (COURTYARD):

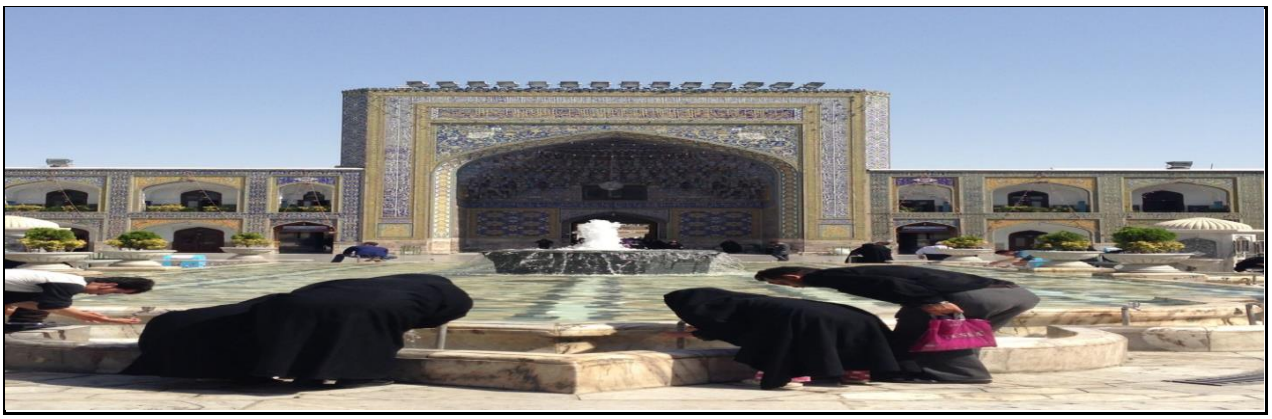
The Sahn is a massive courtyard used to accommodate excess members from the musalla of the masjid. A common feature of the

Sahn is a wall and an ablution fountain. Furthermore, it is also important to note that the sahn of the masjid is only regarded as being a part of the actual masjid whenever it is enclosed on all sides, attached to the structure of the masjid, and can be entered from the outside by way of a door. Therefore, if the courtyard is a separate structure from the masjid or is open to the highway, it will be considered a part of the outer yard and is not to be regarded as a part of the masjid.

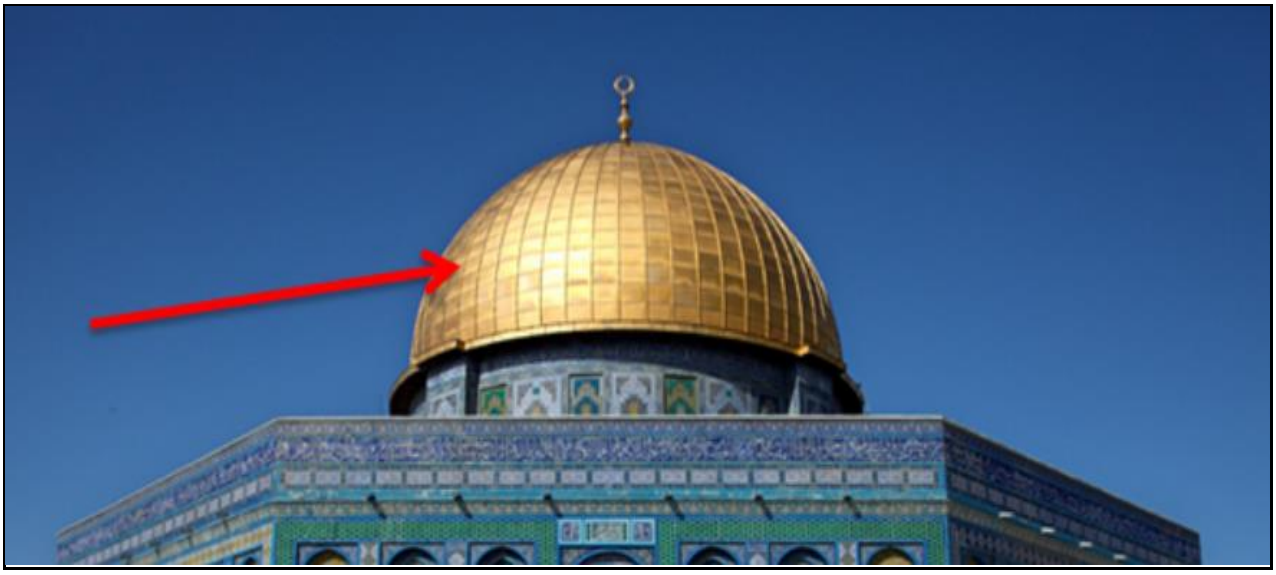
As such, any person in that particular area will not be counted as being within the actual masjid. Consequently, a person observing I'tikaf is not permitted to visit this area. Nevertheless, whenever the courtyard of the masjid is regarded as a part of the masjid structure, the same rulings that apply to the masjid will also apply to it.

ABLUTION FOUNTAIN:

Another feature common to the courtyard of the masjid are decorative pools and fountains which originally served the purpose of supplying water for ablution. However, today's masajid are generally equipped with indoor ablution stations. Furthermore, the pool of a masjid may, or may not have a fountain; however, when used for the purpose of ablution, it is more likely to have a fountain to allow a number of worshippers to wash simultaneously under the running water. The pool is typically positioned at, or near the center of the open courtyard

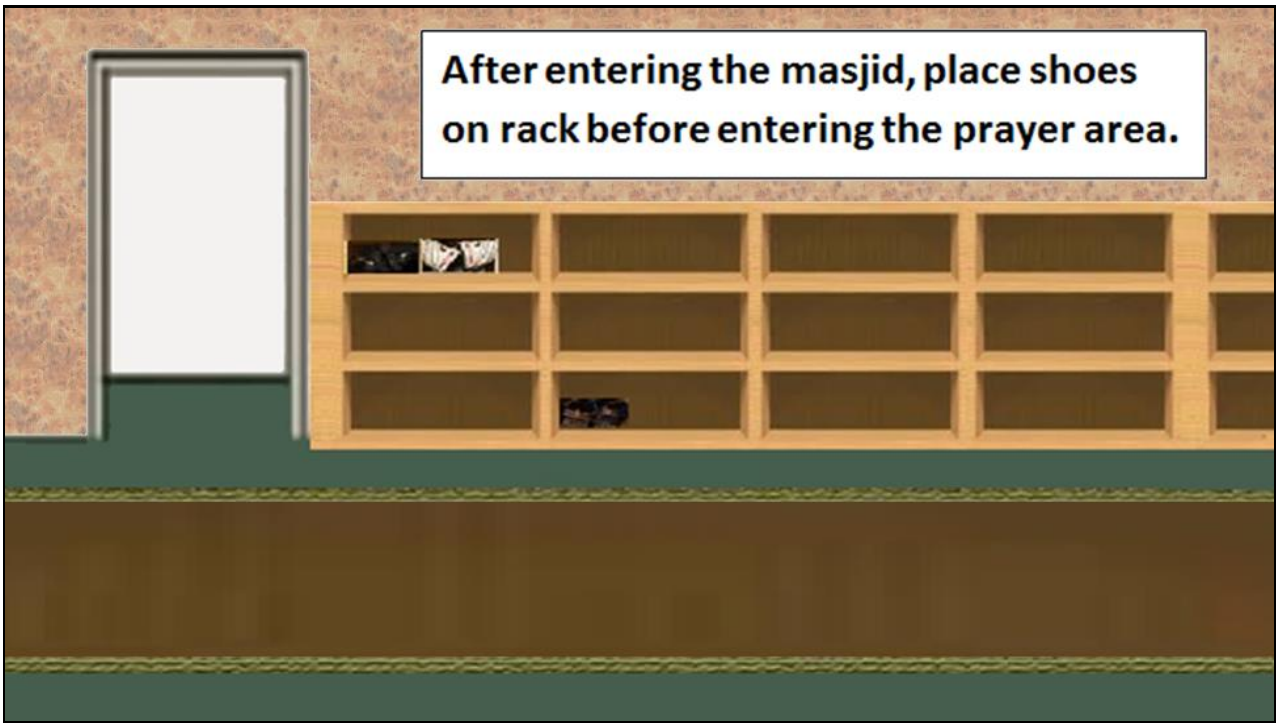


DOME :



Domes are among the most common feature that has been incorporated into the design of the masjid. The domes were originally placed directly above the musalla near the mihrab. However, over time, dome placement expanded to the point that they would cover the entire roof above the prayer hall. In addition to the main large dome positioned directly over the musalla, a number of masajid are equipped with multiple, often smaller, domes. The domed roof of a masjid serves two primary purposes; namely, to serve as a rudimentary form of air-conditioning which allows air to circulate around the prayer hall and to amplify the voice of the Imam so that he can be heard clearly by the congregation. Lastly, the shape of domes varies greatly; ranging from the traditional hemisphere-shaped design to the popularized onion-shaped style.

SHOE RACK:



The shoe and coat rack in a masjid are generally position near the entrance to the prayer hall. Furthermore, although it is permissible for a Muslim to perform salat in their shoes, it is customary to remove them in modern masajid with carpeted floors. This is a precautionary measure which ensures that

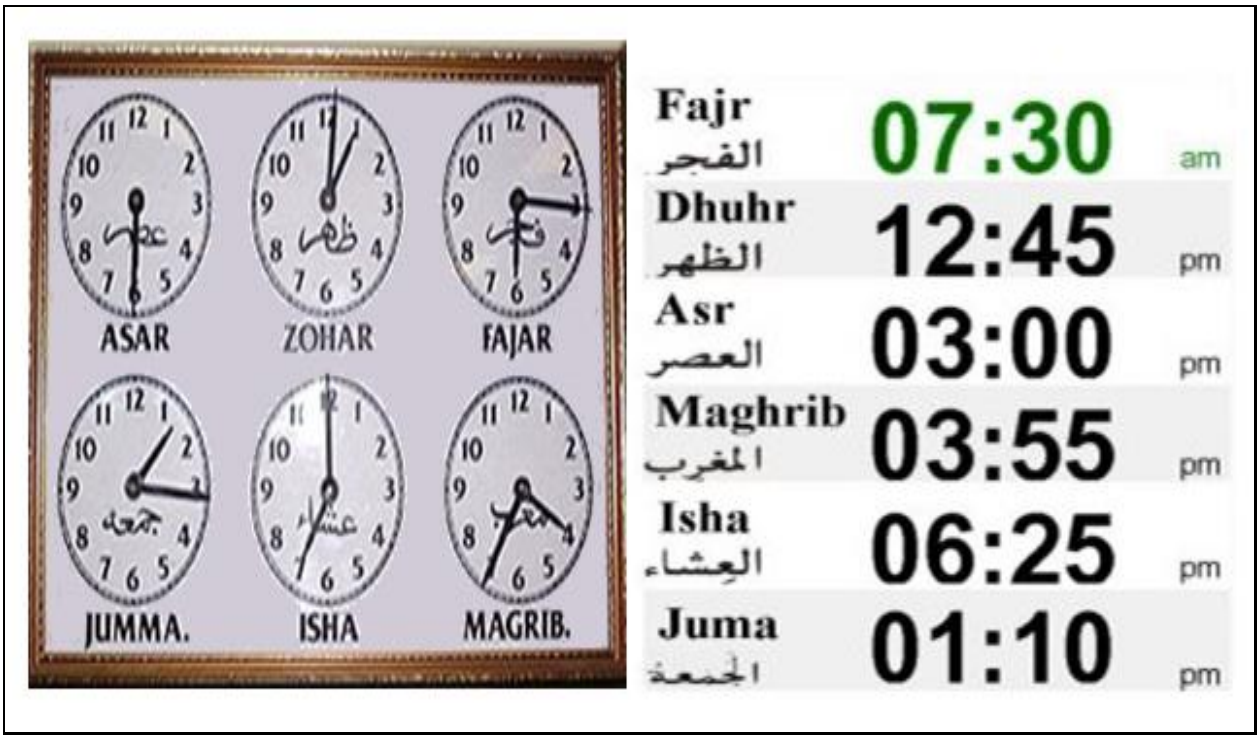
impurities from outside will not be transferred onto the clean carpet. The evidence for this ruling is the hadith of Abu Dawud wherein Abu Sa'eed al-Khudri reportedly said: "**Whilst the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) was leading his companions in prayer, he took off his shoes and placed them to his left. When the people saw that, they took off their shoes. When the Messenger of Allah had finished the prayer he said, 'What made you take off your shoes?' They said, 'We saw you take off your shoes, so we took off our shoes.' The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) said: 'Jibreel (AS) came to me and told me that there was some dirt on them.' And he said: 'When one of you comes to the mosque, let him check his shoes, and if he seeds any dirt on them, let him wipe them and pray in them.'**" Therefore, in light of this evidence, it is permissible to pray in one's shoes; however, to avoid unnecessary conflict, it is strongly encouraged that one removes their shoes before entering the musalla unless wearing khuffain (a type of leather socks).

WUDU STATION:

All masajid are equipped with a station for worshippers to perform ablution. The designs vary greatly; however, all are equipped with a source of fresh clean water. The evidence for performing wudu to purify one's body for salat is Surah Al-Ma'idah (5:6) of the Quran which reads: **"O you who have believed, when you rise to [perform] prayer, wash your faces and your forearms to the elbows and wipe over your heads and wash your feet to the ankles. And if you are in a state of janabah,**

then purify yourselves. But if you are ill or on a journey or one of you comes from the place of relieving himself or you have contacted women and do not find water, then seek clean earth and wipe over your faces and hands with it. Allah does not intend to make difficulty for you, but He intends to purify you and complete His favor upon you that you may be grateful."

PRAYER CLOCKS AND POSTED PRAYER TIMES:



A masjid will generally be equipped with a clock that displays the times for the five daily salat and salatul-Jumuah. These useful tools will be positioned on the qibla wall. A number of masajid also provide worshippers with printed copies of the monthly prayer times to take with them.

PREREQUISITES FOR VISITING A MASJID

Prior to attending any masjid, it is extremely advantageous to be knowledgeable of the general etiquette and guidelines for this place of worship. Thus, this document is designed to equip the novice Muslim or non-Muslim with some useful information that will ensure that their visit to the masjid is a tranquil and gratifying experience.

BEFORE VISITING A MASJID:

Before visiting a particular masjid, one should search online for directions to the location in question as well as for posted salat times for the observance of specific congregational prayers; i.e., the five daily prayers: fajr, zuhr, asr, maghrib, isha; the Friday - Jumuah, the Sunday - taleem, Eid, tarawih, etc., so that they arrive prior to the commencement of the event. The evidence for this ruling is the hadith of Bukhari wherein Abu Hurayrah narrated that the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) said: "**Whoever does ghusl on Friday like ghusl for janabah, then goes to the prayer (in the first hour, i.e., early), it is as if he sacrificed a camel. Whoever goes in the second hour, it is as if he sacrificed a cow; whoever goes in the third hour, it is as if he sacrificed a horned ram; whoever goes in the fourth hour, it is as if he sacrificed a hen; and whoever goes in the fifth hour it is as if he offered an egg.**

When the imam comes out, the angels come to listen to the khutbah.”

PREPARE YOURSELF PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY:

Physical preparation - Before visiting any masjid, it is imperative that one prepares themselves for the fact that they are entering a place of worship. Therefore, every effort must be taken to ensure that one is not in a state of complete ritual impurity. Complete ritual impurity is generally the result of having sexual-intercourse with one’s spouse or emitting semen/sexual discharge, even when it is not through means of direct intercourse, as in the case of wet dreams or masturbation. Moreover, being plagued by menstruation and post-partum bleeding also makes one’s body ceremonially impure. Therefore, if one is ceremonially impure as a result of any of the above mentioned scenarios, a complete washing of the body, including rinsing the mouth and sniffing water into the nostrils, as well as blowing it out, is required in order to fulfill the basic perquisites of the purification process; thus, making the performance of ghusl as demonstrated by the Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H.) the ideal method for making one’s body ceremonially pure for performing acts of worship.

It is also important to note that although performing ghusl is the ideal act with regard to making one’s body ceremonially

pure for performing acts of worship, it is not obligatory for attending the Friday – Jumuah prayer at the masjid. The evidence for this position is the hadith of Bukhari wherein Abu Said reported: "**I testify that Allah's Apostle (P.B.U.H.) said, 'The taking of a bath on Friday is compulsory for every male Muslim who has attained the age of puberty and (also) the cleaning of his teeth with Siwak, and the using of perfume if it is available.'**" Nevertheless, an authentic narration from the collection of Abu Dawud reports that Samurah quoted Allah's Messenger (P.B.U.H.) as saying: "**Whoever makes wudu on Friday, it is good [for him], but if ghusl is performed, it is better.**"

The foundation behind the initial ruling of ghusl being obligatory for Jumuah is summed up by the following hadith of Abu Dawud wherein Ikramah reported: "**A group of people came to Ibn Abbas from Al-Iraq. They said: 'Oh Ibn Abbas, do you think that Ghusl on Friday is obligatory?' He replied: 'No, but it is purer and better for the one who performs Ghusl. And whoever does not perform Ghusl, it is not obligatory for him. And I will inform you how (this) Ghusl started. People used to work hard; they would wear wool garments, and would work with their backs (meaning, manual labor). And their Masjid was small, with a low roof, made out of palm-leaves. One day, the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) came out on a hot day, and people were sweating in**

their wool garments, until the stench from them harmed (disturbed and distracted) others. When the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) smelled this odor, he said: 'Oh people! When this day arrives, then perform Ghusl, and let everyone of you apply the best oil and fragrance that he has.' Then Ibn Abbas said: 'After this, Allah, Exalted is His remembrance, blessed (the Muslims) with much good, and so they wore other than wool, and did not have to work (themselves), and their Masjid was expanded. So the matter which used to trouble them, of (the stench) from their sweat was removed.'" Thus, if the one planning to attend a masjid on Friday wishes to gain more reward from Allah, they should perform a complete ghusl in the authentic manner described by the Prophet Mohammed (P.B.U.H.). However, merely performing wudu will suffice.

It is also important to note that the Friday ghusl can be performed as early as the start of fajr since the start of the new day in Islam actually begins at dawn. Thus, the true dawn (al-fajr al-sadiq) commences when the fajr prayer begins and the one who intends to fast should refrain from food, drink and sexual intercourse with their spouse. This is what Surah Al-Baqarah (2:187) of the Quran is referring to when it says (interpretation of the meaning): "**...and eat and drink until the white thread (light) of dawn appears to you distinct from the**

black thread (darkness of night)..." Furthermore, the words of the Prophet (P.B.U.H.): '**...whoever does ghusl on Friday then sets out in the first hour...**' that were documented in a hadith collected by Abu Dawud that was narrated by Aws ibn Aws ath-Thaqafi, maintains that a Friday – Jumuah ghusl is not valid if done before true dawn.

Al-Bahooti al-Hanbali further expounds on the subject: The beginning of its time is the break of dawn; doing ghusl before then is not valid..., but it is better to do ghusl just before going to Jumuah, because that is closer to achieving the purpose; i.e., eliminating impurities and odor from one's body. However, Imam Malik opined that the time for ghusl on Friday begins just before going to the prayer, and it is not acceptable to perform it except around the time of going to the Jumuah Khutbah; thus, if a person does ghusl after dawn and does not go to the mosque straightaway, that is not acceptable and it is recommended for him to repeat it; i.e., the complete ghusl.

With this being said, these points of view have been included solely for the benefit of the reader; because, to reiterate, performing Friday ghusl is highly recommended but not obligatory. Nevertheless, if one decides to perform a Friday ghusl after dawn but somehow nullifies it prior to attending the Jumuah khutbah (Friday sermon), performing wudu will suffice,

unless one of those acts which permanently nullify ghusl was committed. The evidence for this position is a narration wherein Al-Athram, said: "I heard Ahmad being asked if a person performed ghusl, and then lost it, would the regular ablution be sufficient for him. He said, 'Yes, and I have not heard anything about that preferable to the hadith of Ibn 'Abzi." In this report, Ahmad is referring to the hadith related by Ibn 'Abzi Shaibah (with a sahih chain from 'Abdurahman ibn 'Abzi on the authority of his father, who was a companion.) "**He performed ghusl for the Friday prayer, and afterwards nullified his ablution. After that, he performed just the regular ablution, and did not repeat his ghusl**."

Mental preparation - Before visiting any masjid, it is also imperative that one mentally prepares themselves for the fact that they are entering a place of worship. By being aware that one is entering a place of worship, one should make every effort to become affiliated with not only fundamental Islamic guidelines but also with the dominant cultural norms of the members of the masjid in question. In essence, just as one would not enter another's home as their guest and conduct themselves in a discourteous manner, the level of respect as regards a masjid should be heightened; because, masajid (mosques) are regarded as being owned by Allah, despite the fact that they are

built by men. This fact is evident from Surah At-Tauba (9:18) of the Quran which reads: "**Only he should visit or tend God's houses of worship who believes in God and the Last Day, and is constant in prayer, and spends in charity, and stands in awe of none but God: for [only such as] these may hope to be among the right guided**!"

It is also important to note that a number of new Muslims and non-Muslim visitors to a masjid are often unfamiliar with many of the cultural norms of the Muslim Ummah which could result in one committing an offensive act or becoming offended by the actions of another individual. With this being said, it is beyond the scope of this document to mention every aspect of concern, nevertheless, some key items will be addressed. Therefore, one planning to attend a masjid should avoid using everything that has an offensive smell like garlic, onion, smoking, etc. One's clothes, shoes, and socks should also be changed prior to visiting a masjid if they contain impurities, or have a pungent odor, so that they do not offend any of the angels or Muslims occupants. The evidence for these rulings is the hadith of Bukhari wherein Jabir ibn 'Abd-Allah reportedly said: "**The Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) said: 'Whoever eats garlic or onions, let him keep away from us, or keep away from our mosque and stay in his house.'**" In addition, a version of

this hadith collected by Imam Muslim reports: "**Whoever eats onions or garlic or leeks, let him not come near our mosque, for the angels are offended by the same things that offend the sons of Adam (mankind).**"

In addition to offensive smells and clothing, one should take care not to commit offensive actions such as inappropriately looking, talking, or attempting to touch members of the opposite gender. This is extremely important because outside of Islam it is common for members of the opposite gender to gaze into the eyes of each other, shake hands, embrace, and even kiss one another on the cheek at times. However, these acts are not acceptable in Islam whenever the other party is one whom marriage to them is permissible. This fact is evident from Surah An-Nur (24:30 -31) of the Quran which reads: "**Say to the believing men that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty: that will make for greater purity for them: and Allah is well acquainted with all that they do. Likewise enjoin the believing women to lower their gaze and guard their modesty; not to display their beauty and ornaments except what normally appears thereof; let them draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their charms except to their husbands, their fathers, their fathers-in-law, their own sons, their stepsons, their own brothers, their nephews on either brothers' or**

sisters' sides, their own womenfolk, their own slaves, male attendants who lack sexual desires or small children who have no carnal knowledge of women. Also enjoin them not to strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden trinkets. And O believers! Turn to Allah in repentance, all of you, about your past mistakes, so that you may attain salvation."

Lastly, despite, being aware of those actions which are generally deemed offensive, one should be mindful not to disturb those who are reading the Quran, performing salat, engaged in remembering Allah (dhikr), etc., in the masjid by talking in their presence about worldly affairs; because, this can distract those Muslims from performing these acts of worship properly. Just imagine how annoying it is when someone is talking loudly during their cell phone conversation while in a public place. When this happens it becomes extremely difficult to concentrate on the task at hand. So, when a person is engaged in silently remembering Allah, reading the Quran, or performing salat, etc., it becomes extremely difficult to focus on the desired act of worship when the individual standing next to you is debating politics, or retelling the details of a sporting event. Furthermore, disturbing others is not allowed, even if it takes the form of reading the Quran, or telling someone who is talking to be quiet during the Jumuah Khutbah. The evidence for these

rulings is the hadith of Abu Dawud wherein Abdullah bin Omar narrated: "**The prophet (P.B.U.H.) saw some people praying, and they became loud in their prayer. He said: 'The praying person is in contact with his Lord, so let him concentrate on whom he is in contact with, and do not raise your voices over one another with (reciting loudly) the Quran**." Furthermore, a hadith of Bukhari that was narrated by Abu Hurayrah reports: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said: 'If you say to your companion when the imam is preaching on Friday, 'Be quiet and listen,' you have engaged in idle talk**.'" Lastly, a hadith collected by Ibn Majah that was narrated by Abu'l-Darda' reports: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) sat on the minbar and addressed the people, and he recited a verse. Ubayy ibn Ka'b was next to me, so I said to him: 'O Ubayy, when was this verse revealed?' But he refused to speak to me, so I asked him again and he refused to speak to me, until the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) came down (from the minbar). Then Ubayy said to me: 'You have gained nothing from your Jumuah except idle talk.' When the Messenger of Allah (P.B.U.H.) had finished (the prayer), I went to him and told him (what had happened). He said: 'Ubayy was right. When you hear your Imam speaking, then keep quiet and listen attentively until he has finished**.'"

WEAR YOUR BEST GARMENTS:

One should put on their best attire when attending the masjid to perform an act of worship. It is also permissible for men to wear pleasant smelling fragrances. However, one should not go to the extreme and apply a fragrance so heavily as to disturb those next to him. Nevertheless, even if one is wearing some fragrance, they should not be impolite and refuse the fragrance offered to him by another. These facts are evident from Surah Al A'raf (7:31) of the Quran which reads: "**O Children of Adam! Put on your adornment (decent proper dress) when you attend your Masjid at the time of every prayer**..." Furthermore, a hadith collected by Bukhari that was narrated by Abu Sa'id reports: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said: 'Every Muslim should have a ghusl on Friday and wear his best clothing, and if he has perfume, he should use it**.'" Moreover, another hadith collected by Bukhari that was narrated by Anas bin Malik reports: "**The Prophet (P.B.U.H.) never refused a gift of perfume**."

LEAVE HOME EARLY:

Before visiting a particular masjid, one should leave home early enough to ensure that they will have adequate time to park their vehicle and make ablution if necessary. Masjid accommodations can vary a great deal from one location to the next. Therefore, one should not make the mistake of generalizing

and assume that since one masjid has a large parking area with attendants directing traffic and a spacious wudu station able to accommodate a large number of people simultaneously, that this will be the case at every masjid. Furthermore, one should leave home early enough to ensure that they will not be late for the obligatory congregational salat. The evidence for this ruling is the hadith of Bukhari wherein Abu Huraira reported: **"Allah's Apostle (P.B.U.H.) said, 'Any person who takes a bath on Friday like the bath of Janaba and then goes for the prayer (in the first hour i.e. early), it is as if he had sacrificed a camel (in Allah's cause); and whoever goes in the second hour it is as if he had sacrificed a cow; and whoever goes in the third hour, then it is as if he had sacrificed a horned ram; and if one goes in the fourth hour, then it is as if he had sacrificed a hen; and whoever goes in the fifth hour then it is as if he had offered an egg. When the Imam comes out (i.e. starts delivering the Khutba), the angels present themselves to listen to the Khutba.'"**

IMPORTANT NOTE:

It is important to note that when visiting a masjid to perform the five daily obligatory prayers (fajr, zuhr, asr, maghrib, isha), in the case of females, their prayers have more value when made at home; especially, if made in a particular

room, than they are if they were observed in a masjid. Moreover, a female is not even required to attend the Friday – Jumuah congregational prayer. However, as the matter pertains to males, their observance of the five obligatory prayers produces more value for them in the sight of Allah when they are observed in the masjid versus being performed at home. Moreover, attending a masjid to observe the weekly, Friday – Jumuah congregational prayer is obligatory for men.

The above mentioned rulings are supported by the Quran in Surah Al Jumuah (62:9) which reads: "O ye who believe! When the call is proclaimed to prayer on Friday (the Day of Assembly), hasten earnestly to the Remembrance of Allah and leave off business (and traffic): that is best for you if ye but knew!" Moreover, according to a narration of Abu Dawud, Ibn 'Umar narrated that the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) reportedly said: "**Do not prevent the women from going to the mosques, although their houses are better for them.**" Furthermore, another narration collected by Abu Dawud states that Abdullah Bin Mas'ud reported that the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said: "**It is more excellent for a woman to pray in her house than in her courtyard, and more excellent for her to pray in her private chamber than in her house.**"

The reasoning behind the prayer of a female being worth more when performed at home than in the masjid has to do with the fact that the Prophet (P.B.U.H) reportedly said that if a person were to pray in the mosque (congregation) he would obtain 27 times more blessings than he would if he performed the salat alone. The evidence for the Prophet's (P.B.U.H.) statements are found in a narration collected by Bukhari, wherein Ibn Omar and his father, reported the Prophet Mohamed (P.B.U.H.) as saying: "**Offering the prayer in congregation carries 27 times greater reward than offering it alone individually.**" As a result of the Prophet's (P.B.U.H.) statements, some women argued that since they had infants at home and other household work to perform which prevented them from attending the masjid whenever they desired, the men would have an unfair advantage over them for receiving such blessings. Therefore, the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) issued a concession to appease the concerns of the women who would otherwise be deprived of an opportunity to obtain the desired twenty-seven times more reward in salat.

As the matter pertains to the weekly, Friday – Jumuah congregational prayer, Fiqh-us-Sunnah (Fiqh 2.131a - Topic: Who are exempted from the obligatory Friday mid-day prayers) maintains that "Salatul Jumuah is an obligation upon every free, sane, resident, adult male believer who has the ability to

attend the ‘salah’ and does not have a valid excuse to miss it. Salatul Jumuah, however, is not obligatory on the following:

1. Women.
2. Children.
3. The person who is ill and faces hardship if he goes to the mosque, or who fears that his illness will be increased by going to the mosque, or whose recovery will be delayed. This also includes the person who is nursing a very ill person; especially, in instances where the ill person cannot manage in the absence of the nursing person.
4. For the traveler. This is based on the fact that the Prophet (saws) traveled and did not perform the ‘Salatul Jumuah’ but only prayed the ‘dhuhr’ and 'asr’ together during the time of the ‘dhuhr’ prayers.
5. Environmental restraints like extreme rain or cold, etc.

The evidence for the above mentioned information is the hadith of Abu Dawud wherein Tariq ibn Shihaab reported that the Prophet (P.B.U.H.) said: “**Jumuah is a duty that is required of every Muslim in congregation, except four: a slave, a woman, a child, and the one who is sick.**”